

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00  
PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 PRS-01  
SP-02 SS-15 SSM-03 IO-13 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00  
INRE-00 /074 W

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O R 211617Z OCT 77  
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8834  
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
AMEMBASSY JIDDA  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 8227

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, IS  
SUBJECT: THE DMC DECISION TO JOIN THE COALITION

REF: A) TEL AVIV 8052 B) TEL AVIV 8156

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: FOLLOWING A PERIOD OF INCREASING  
UNCERTAINTY ABOUT ITS FUTURE TOLE THE DMC HAS NOW REAFFIRMED  
THE FATEFUL AND RISKY DECISION OF JOINING THE  
GOVERNMENT COALITION ON BEGIN'S TERMS WITHOUT FIRM  
ASSURANCES AS TO ITS WEIGHT IN KEY POLICY DECISIONS.  
THE ACCESSION OF DMC AT THIS LATE DATE ENDED THE  
PROCESS OF HASSLING WITHIN THE LIKUD OVER THE  
APPROTIONMENT OF THE REMAINING CABINET POSITIONS,  
BUT EVOKED NEW UNCERTAINTIES AND TENSIONS OVER THE  
EVENTUAL IMPACT OF THE DMC WITHIN THE NEWLY ENLARGED  
COALITION. THE PREDOMINANT REASON FOR THE  
CHANGE IN THE DMC POSITION IS APPARENTLY ITS DISIRE  
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TO HAVE YADIN ON THE INDSIDE IN ANTICIPATION OF MOVES  
TOWARD CHOOSING A SUCCESSOR BO BEGIN. FOR HIS PART  
BEGIN APPEARS WILLING TO ACCPET THE DMC ON THE  
TERMS PREVIOUSLY OFFERED BECAUSE HE WANTS A BROADER  
MAJORITY FOR HIS GOVERNMENT IN THE KNESSET. IN  
CONSIDERING THE RAMIFICATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS OF  
THE DMC MOVE, OF GREATEST INTEREST TO THE

US WILL BE WHAT, IF ANY, ROLE YADIN MAY BE PERMITTED TO PLAY IN THE FOREIGN POLICY DECISION MAKING PROCESS, WHICH SO FAR REMAINS THE VIRTUALLY EXCLUSIVE PRIVILEGE OF BEGIN AND DAYAN.

3. THE DMC'S JOINING THE COALITION IS BOUND TO AFFECT ALSO THE ALIGNMENT WHOSE IMMEDIATE REACTION IS ONE OF DISAPPOINTMENT AND OF DISPLAYING GREAT MILITANCY TOWARD THE GOVERNMENT, SINCE ITS CHANCES OF CHALLENGING THE NEW MAJORITY ARE NOW FURTHER REDUCED. ENLARGEMENT OF THE COALITION IS ALSO EXPECTED TO SHARPEN FACTIONAL CONFLICTS BETWEEN THE LIBERALS AND THE HERUT. END SUMMARY

3. DMC CONSIDERATIONS. DMC MEMBERS FACED A DIFFICULT DILEMMA AS THEY CONSIDERED WHETHER TO JOIN THE GOVERNMENT COALITION AFTER IT HAD BEEN IN OFFICE FOUR MONTHS. ARGUING FOR PARTICIPATION WERE THE SEVERAL FACTORS. THE PARTY HAS UNDERGONE A SERIOUS EROSION IN PUBLIC OPINION; ONE POLL ESTIMATED THAT IF THE ELECTIONS WERE HELD TODAY THE DMC WOULD HOLD ONLY FOUR KNESSET SEATS INSTEAD OF THE FIFTEEN IT NOW HAS. THE PARTY HAS TRIED OPPOSITION AND HAS FOUND IT DOES NOT LIKE IT. THE EXPERIENCED AND TALENTED DMC MEMBERS HAVE BEEN UNHAPPY AS THEY CONTEMPLATED THE UNSATISFYING ROLE

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OF CRITICISING AND SNIPING AT GOVERNMENT DECISIONS, RATHER THAN PARTICIPATING IN REACHING THOSE DECISIONS AS MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT. (FOR EXAMPLE, MEIR AMIT AS THE FORMER HEAD OF KOOR HAS HEADED THE LARGEST INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX IN THE MIDDLE EAST; HE COULD NOT BE SATISFIED WITH BEING AN OPPOSITION BACK BENCHER.) THERE HAS ALSO BEEN A FEELING THAT THE PARTY MUST BE INVOLVED IN GOVERNING, OR DISINTEGRATE BECAUSE IT HAS NO LONG HISTORY AND NO MOTIVATING IDEOLOGY OTHER THAN SHARED DESIRES TO BRING ABOUT CHANGE. NOT LEAST THERE IS ALSO THE ATTRACTIVE PROSPECT OF THE DMC MANAGEMENT ORIENTED TEAM OF AMIT, TAMIR AND OTHERS MAKING COMMON CAUSE WITH A SIMILARLY ORIENTED TEAM AMONG THE LIBERALS, THEREBY STRENGTHENING DMC-LIBERAL INFLUENCE AGAINST HERUT ONCE INITIAL LIBERAL RESENTMENT AGAINST THE ARRIVAL OF THE LATE COMERS IS DISSIPATED.

4. THE DMC DECISION WAS CLEARLY FRAUGHT WITH CONSIDERABLE RISKS. WITH A GOVERNMENTAL WORKING TEAM AROUND BEGIN ALREADY ESTABLISHED, YADIN AND

HIS DMC MINISTERS MAY FACE DIFFICULTIES IN ASSERTING  
THEMSELVES AS NEWCOMERS. MOREOVER, AMONG THE  
FACTORS ARGUING AGAINST JOINING THE GOVERNMENT  
WAS THE SELF-ABASEMENT IN COMING ONCE AGAIN TO  
THE LIKUD TO DISCUSS JOINING THE GOVERNMENT.  
IN ADDITION, IT WAS CLEAR THAT THE TERMS WHICH WOULD  
BE OFFERED THIS FOURTH TIME AROUND WERE UNCHANGED  
AND THAT THE PARTY COULD HOPE TO GET NO BETTER  
OFFER THAN IT HAD OBTAINED PREVIOUSLY. THE REASONS  
FOR PREVIOUS DECISIONS TO REMAIN OUTSIDE THE  
COALITION WERE STILL VALID: CONCERN ON THE  
PART OF SOME DMC MEMBERS THAT THE KNESSET DELEGATION  
WOULD BE NOTHING MORE THAN A RUBBER-STAMP FOR  
DECISIONS REACHED IN THE CABINET AND THAT THEIR  
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ROLE IN DECISION-MAKING WOULD BE NO LARGER THAN IT  
IS NOW; AND THE PURELY IDEOLOGICAL OPPOSITION OF  
MKS SUCH AS AMNON RUBENSTEIN WHO SIMPLY WILL NOT  
COMPROMISE HIS PRINCIPLES TO THE EXTENT NECESSARY  
TO PARTICIPATE IN A GOVERNMENT DOMINATED BY BEGIN'S  
LIKUD. THERE MAY WELL BE SOME DEFECTIONS TO THE  
OPPOSITION AFTER THE DUST HAS SETTLED.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 TEL AVIV 8227

5. GIVEN THESE DIFFICULT CONSIDERATIONS, WHY THEN DID THE DMC DECIDE TO TAKE THE STEP IT HAD FOUND IMPOSSIBLE ON EARLIER OCCASIONS? THE PUBLICLY STATED REASON IS THE INCREASING CONFRONTATION WITH THE U.S. AND THE DIFFICULT DECISIONS WHICH LIE AHEAD FOR ISRAEL. FOR EXAMPLE, YADIN SAID AFTER TALKING TO BEGIN OCTOBER 19, THAT HE HAD NOT BEEN AWARE UNTIL HE WAS IN THE U.S. OF HOW SERIOUSLY RELATIONS BETWEEN THE U.S. AND ISRAEL HAD DETERIORATED. HOWEVER, IT APPEARS THAT THE DMC WAS INFLUENCED IN ITS DECISIONS BY THE CONTINUING RUMORS OF BEGIN'S ILL HEALTH. IT APPARENTLY DECIDED IT WAS BETTER TO HAVE ITS LEADER INSIDE THE GOVERNMENT AS MANEUVERS START TO CHOOSE A SUCCESSOR TO THE PRIME MINISTER. AS DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER, YADIN WILL PROBABLY SERVE AS INTERIM PRIME MINISTER SHOULD BEGIN LEAVE THE SCENE UNTIL A SUCCESSOR IS CHOSEN. WITH NO OBVIOUS HEIR APPARENT IN THE LIKUD, YADIN'S TENURE AS INTERIM PRIME MINISTER COULD BE A LONG  
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ONE. MOREOVER, THIS POSITION WOULD MAKE HIM A POSSIBLE COMPROMISE CANDIDATE AS BEGIN'S SUCCESSOR OR AT LEAST ENSURE HIM AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE CHOICE. HOWEVER, FOLLOWING SUCH A HIGHLY PERSONALIZED GOVERNMENT, THE IMPACT OF A SUDDEN SUCCESS OF CRISIS WILL REMAIN HIGHLY UNPREDICTABLE.

6. LIKUD CONSIDERATIONS. CLEARLY LIKUD'S DECISION TO ACCEPT THE DMC INTO THE COALITION, WHEN THE DIVISION OF THE THREE REMAINING MINISTERIAL POSTS WITHIN THE LIKUD HAD ALREADY BEEN DECIDED, WAS IMPOSED BY BEGIN PERSONALLY, AS HE HAS IMPOSED MANY OTHER DIFFICULT DECISIONS. RESIDUAL RESENTMENT, ESPECIALLY WITHIN HERUT, IS BOUND TO LINGER. WHY, THEN, WAS BEGIN STILL WILLING TO HAVE THE DMC JOIN HIS COALITION, PARTICULARLY AFTER THE RATHER ACROMONIOUS END TO THE LAST NEGOTIATIONS; AND WHY DID HE STILL OFFER ESSENTIALLY THE SAME TERMS? THE ANSWER IS THAT HE HAS CONSISTENTLY DESIRED TO HAVE A BROADER BASED COALITION IN ORDER TO ENHANCE ITS ACCEPTATNCE BY ISRAELI PUBLIC OPINION AND TO BROADEN ITS POLITICAL BASE IN THE KNESSET. A MAJORITY OF 78 SEATS IS MUCH MORE STABLE THAN 63. THIS POINT WAS PROBABLY RE-EMPHASIZED TO BEGIN IN THE VOTE THIS WEEK IN THE KNESSET ON THE QUESTION OF

RENEWING THE MANDATE OF THE CHIEF RABBIS (TEL AVIV 8121). ALTHOUGH IT WAS NOT A CRITICAL DEFECTION, THE AGUDAH PARTIES OPPOSED THE GOVERNMENT ON THIS QUESTION AND THIS PROBABLY REMINDED BEGIN OF THE TENUOUS NATURE OF HIS PARLIAMENTARY SUPPORT, AT LEAST ON SOME QUESTIONS. HAVING WORKED FOR TWENTY-NINE YEARS TO HEAD THE GOVERNMENT, BEGIN IS EAGER  
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TO DO WHAT HE CAN TO PERPETUATE A LIKUD GOVERNMENT AND THE INCLUSION OF THE DMC IS AN ACCEPTABLE PRICE.

7. HOWEVER, IT IS MORE THAN A QUESTION OF NUMBERS. BEGIN PROBABLY HOPES THAT ONCE THE DMC IS CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH THE LIKUD IN THE GOVERNMENT SOME NATURAL AFFINITIES WILL BE FOUND AND SOME DMC MEMBERS WILL BE TEMPTED TO SWITCH TO LIKUD. FINALLY, BEGIN IS AWARE THAT HIS GOVERNMENT GAINS IN RESPECTABILITY AND ACCEPTABILITY--IN ISRAEL AND ABROAD--AND HE CAN MORE LEGITIMATELY CLAIM TO BE THE LEADER OF THE JEWISH STATE.

8. EFFECTS ON THE ALIGNMENT. THE DMC'S SWITCH FROM OPPOSITION TO THE GOVERNMENT WAS A RATHER SUDDEN BLOW TO LABOR'S OPPOSITION STRATEGY AND ITS ABILITY TO CHALLENGE THE GOVERNMENT. THUS THE REACTION WAS NOT UNEXPECTEDLY ONE OF HOSTILITY. LABOR NOW AT BEST IS HOPING FOR A FEW DEFECTIONS FROM THE DMC TO ITS OWN RANKS. AT THE SAME TIME ITS STANCE TOWARD THE GOVERNMENT WILL BE ONE OF SHARPENING ITS ATTACKS ON BOTH FOREIGN POLICY AND IN THE SOCIAL-ECONOMIC FIELDS, WHERE IT FEELS THAT THE GOVERNMENT COALITION MAY BE FAR FROM UNITED.

9. IMPLICATIONS. THE MEANING OF THE DMC MOVE FOR ISRAEL'S POLITICAL PICTURE IS A SUBJECT WHICH WILL OCCUPY POLITICAL COMMENTATORS FOR SOME TIME TO COME. OF IMMEDIATE INTEREST WILL BE THE IDENTITY OF THE DMC MINISTERS. PRESENT THINKING IS THE DMC WILL HAVE FOUR MINISTERS AND THEY WILL PROBABLY BE YADIN PLUS AMIT, TAMIR, AND POSSIBLY ZOREA OR ISRAEL KATS. (HOWEVER, THERE MAY YET BE A NUMBER OF OTHER CANDIDATES; RUBENSTEIN HAS ALREADY INDICATED HE WILL NOT PARTICIPATE); THE POSITIONS ARE PROBABLY TO BE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER, MINISTER OF  
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TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS, MINISTER OF JUSTICE,  
AND MINISTER OF SOCIAL BETTERMENT, RESPECTIVELY.  
CLEARLY THERE WILL BE FAR-REACHING IMPLICATIONS  
FOR THE NATURE OF THE GOVERNMENT AND THE  
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PARTIES AND BLOCS WITHIN THE  
CABINET WILL BE SIGNIFICANTLY ALTERED. FOR EXAMPEL, THE  
LIBERALS, WHO ARE CONSIDERED THE NATURAL ALLIES  
OF THE DMC, COULD HAVE AT LEAST INITIAL DIFFICULTIES  
IN ADJUSTING TO THE NEW SITUATION. EHRlich WILL  
HAVE TO WORK OUT RELATIONS WITH YADIN WHEN HE TAKES  
ON THE ROLE OF ACTING PRIME MINISTER IN BEGIN'S ABSENCE  
AFTER EHRlich HAD FILLED THAT ROLE UP TO NOW. HOW-  
EVER, EHRlich IS NOT CONSIDERED AS HARBORING AMBITIONS  
TO TAKE OVER LIKUD LEADERSHIP FROM BEGIN.

10. OF GREATEST SIGNIFICANCE TO THE U.S., HOWEVER,  
WILL BE HOW YADIN AS DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER WILL FIT  
INTO THE FOREIGN POLICY DECISION-MAKING MACHINERY OF BEGIN  
AND DAYAN THE DMC CLEARLY HAS DIFFERENT VIEWS ON THE  
OCCUPIED TERRITORIES AND ITS PRESENCE IN THE CABINET  
SURELY WILL CAUSE SHARON TO BE HELD MORE IN CHECK  
THAN WAS THE CASE IN AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER. THERE MAY  
ALSO BE INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT RELATIONS BE-  
TWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND GUSH EMUNIM. THE HOPE OF MANY  
ISRAELIS IS THAT THE DMC IN THE CABINET WILL BRING MORE  
FLEXIBILITY AND A GREATER SENSE OF ACCOMMODATION WITH  
THE U.S. WE DOUBT THAT YADIN CAN  
BREAK INTO THE BEGIN-DAYAN DECISION-MAKING PROCESS  
IN FOREIGN POLICY VERY QUICKLY, BUT HS IS NOT A  
MAN WHOSE FOREIGN POLICY VIEWS WILL BE EASILY IGNORED.  
WE WILL TREAT THIS QUESTION FURTHER IN A SEPTTEL.  
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## Message Attributes

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